Women in Business

Profile of

Women Business Owners

in British Columbia

Survey Findings

1991

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Businesswomen's Advocate

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Profile of Women Business Owners in British Columbia

1991 Survey Findings

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We are pleased to provide you with a copy of *Profile of Women Business Owners in British Columbia, 1991 Survey Findings*. The study was compiled by the Businesswomen's Advocate with the assistance of the Ministry of Economic Development, Small Business and Trade.

The small business sector is the major source of job creation in Canada today, accounting for approximately 90 per cent of all businesses in British Columbia and 40 per cent of the private sector payroll.

British Columbia, with 236,000 had the highest increase in self-employed people of any province in 1990. Thirty-three per cent of that figure - 77,000 - are women, the fasted growing segment of the small business sector.

The government of British Columbia is committed to creating a healthy environment that encourages all entrepreneurs to explore the opportunities this province has to offer.

This study will provide information to assist in the implementation of effective provincial programs for women in business. It will help to identify areas where there is a need for change as well as highlight opportunities for individual and group action toward economic independence for women.

Our government is committed to assisting women to reach their fullest protential as business owners, and in so doing, increase their contribution to the economy of British Columbia through the creation of new businesses, investment and employment.

David Zirnhelt

David Zirnhelt
Minister of Economic Development
Small Business and Trade

Penny Priddy

Penny Priddy
Ministry of Women's Equality

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Executive Summary

I Overview

The aim of this study is to assist in the implementation and creation of effective provincial programs for women in business.

This government has pledged among its key priorities:

- to foster the growth of business ownership among women;
- to remove barriers inhibiting their business development.

A Businesswomen's Advocate has been appointed, with a mandate to increase women's participation in the start-up of new businesses and to improve their chances of survival and growth by integrating them into the mainstream business community.

This report updates the previous baseline data provided by the April 1986 Survey of Women Business Owners in British Columbia.[1]

Information for this report was obtained from 600 responses to 3,000 questionnaires mailed to women in business in April and May of 1991. The results of the questionnaire were tabulated using the software package "Survey It." Some open-ended questions have been adapted to categories to accommodate statistical analysis, while the actual written responses contributed to a more personal overview.

Names and addresses for the mailing list came from many sources including professional associations of women business owners, the Ministry of Women's Programs, other women's networks and from requests by mail and telephone after the survey was publicized. The names and addresses will become part of a database of women in business to be used for networking and mailing of current information relating to business.

II Profile of the Woman Business Owner

The woman business owner in British Columbia is most likely:

- 35 to 44 years of age
- married, with one to three children
- working more than 40 hours per week
- educated beyond high school
- motivated by her personal need for achievement and a desire to control her own destiny.
- accommodating both work and family responsibilities.

Statistics[2] indicate women in British Columbia are starting businesses at three times the rate of men, and represent the fastest growing segment of the small business population.
For example:

- women represent 51.4 per cent of Canadian voters according to June 1990 Statistics Canada figures;
- according to Statistics Canada, the number of self-employed women in British Columbia in 1991 has risen to 77,000 from 62,000 in 1986;
- the number of women choosing to incorporate their business rose to 36.6 per cent of those surveyed in 1991 compared to 13 per cent in the 1986 survey.

III Key Findings

The 1991 survey findings suggest women in business truly do face unique problems, both in establishing businesses and in operating them. Although many of the problems can apply to men as well, they are, nevertheless, compounded for women who are, by comparison, relatively new to the field of business ownership and who face a fading but still significant lack of acceptance as a serious force in the business world.

For women who feel themselves burdened with the obstacles of negative attitudes, difficulty obtaining capital and inadequate training, the road to successful business operation is not an easy one to travel. Yet many survive the journey because they have been able to find or devise coping solutions to obstacles unique to them as women.

A summary of responses to the 1991 questionnaire identified the following eight obstacles facing women in business:

1. Difficulty obtaining capital - getting started and growing.
2. A lack of related business information, training and/or contacts due to isolation from the business world.
3. A lack of operational and emotional support from family, friends and others.
4. Discriminatory attitudes resulting in a lack of professional recognition and difficulty in establishing credibility.
5. A lack of confidence and self-esteem.
6. A lack of suitable and available child care.
7. A shortage of time due to family and business responsibilities resulting in role overload and the superwoman syndrome.
8. A shortage of networks, role models and mentors.

Findings of this survey suggest that any business start-up and business expansion counselling made available will be used. The 1986 survey found that 27 per cent of women attempting to start a business did not consult first with lawyers and accountants. This figure dropped to 5 per cent in the 1991 survey findings.

Indeed, among the perceived unmet needs of women in business is a central source of current business information. There is also a need for counsellors at all stages of business.

Factors listed in the survey under the heading of **"Most Pressing Unmet Needs of Women"** included:

- Difficulty in obtaining capital: 55 per cent
- Lack of business information: 34.8 per cent
- Lack of encouragement from peers/family: 28.7 per cent
- Shortage of skilled labor: 16.3 per cent
- Shortage of raw materials: 2.7 per cent

Interviewees urged such avenues to assistance as:

- an information hotline staffed by properly trained individuals;
- a lending library of business tapes and videos;
- an accessible and up-to-date database of information.

Women would like to see:

- more provincial funds directed toward non-profit groups to provide training and assistance to entrepreneurs;
- more flexible bylaws for their home-based businesses.

Research on successful women business owners suggests that there are several essential ingredients for success:

- access to financial resources;
- information;
- training;
- a high level of confidence and self-esteem.

They also need:

- cooperation and support from the business/professional sector;
- a supportive family;
- the benefit of appropriate role models;
- associations and business networks.

Although men and women often encounter many of the same problems in starting and operating businesses, women did not until recently, have equal access to capital, or the support of established business networks.

As a result, women have traditionally had fewer opportunities for self-employment or business growth. Women continue to earn less than men in paid jobs even though their contributions to our economy are significant. They therefore have less opportunity to accumulate personal assets which could be used as collateral for loans to start their businesses.

Women surveyed stated many financial institutions still perceive women to be a monetary risk, regardless of their financial status.

- Low interest loans would be helpful.

As women often work or start businesses in low paying, time-consuming fields (in the service or the retail sector), they don't have a lot of money or time for business extras, such as the chamber of commerce or other networking opportunities.

- Affordable trade shows and business mixers would be of assistance to them.

The vast majority of women business owners learn how to manage a business for the first time in their own business. Women are also less likely to have business management education and technical training to bring to their businesses. Many business owners are university-educated but rarely in the area of business management.

Women often lack the information, confidence and support needed to access their skills. Women were discouraged from studying business until the 1960's and as a result, women are still trying to catch up with the training, technical skills and networks long enjoyed by men. Women are just beginning to reap the benefits of business networks which are valuable sources of business information.

Besides putting in a full day at the office or in their own business, women often put in a second shift at home to ensure that their family is properly cared for. For these "superwomen," the pressure on their time is incredible. Child care is a recurring dilemma. The extent of problems women face seems to be affected by a number of variables:

- by the amount of experience she has had in handling similar situations;
- by the type of business she is in (male dominated industries are often laden with discrimination);
- by the number of years in business (the longer a woman is in business, the more credible she becomes and the fewer problems she seems to have).

The women surveyed feel sexist stereotyping and prejudices continue to exist making it difficult for women to establish credibility as business people. On-going education is needed to make the public aware of subjective, stereotypical reactions to women and to question underlying assumptions about the ability of women to compete successfully in business.

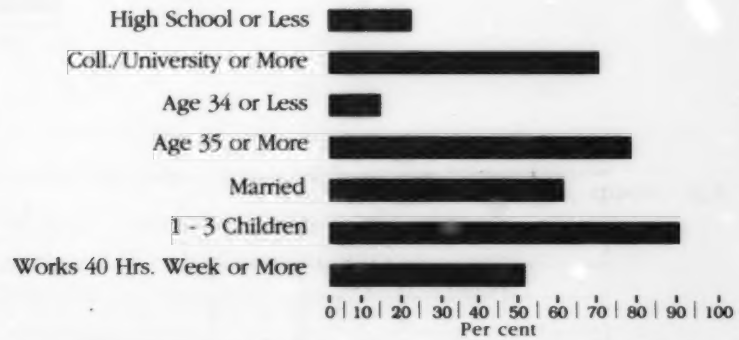
Accordingly, the survey findings underline an ongoing need for the work being done through the office of the Businesswomen's Advocate.

I Profile of the Woman Business Owner

Introduction

A growing number of women are choosing entrepreneurship to satisfy their need for achievement, independence, and to accommodate work and family responsibilities. Statistics Canada figures show that in 1986, 29.4 per cent of all self-employed in British Columbia were women (62,000). In June of 1991, that figure had grown to 32.62 percent – 77,000.

Characteristics of Women in Business


High School or Less
Coll./University or More
Age 34 or Less
Age 35 or More
Married
1 - 3 Children
Works 40 Hrs. Week or More
0 | 10 | 20 | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90 | 100
Per cent

The woman business owner is most likely to fit the profile shown in the above chart:

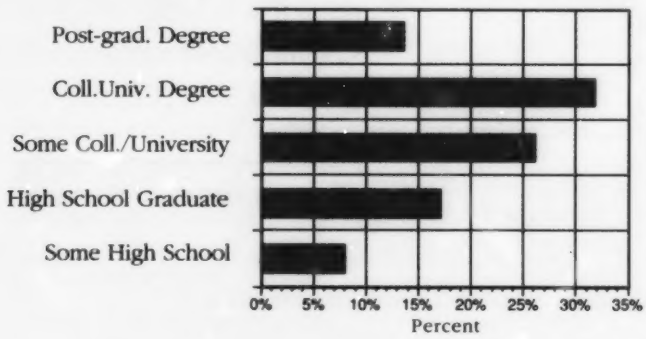
- 71 per cent continue education beyond high school;
- 79.2 per cent are age 35 or more;
- 62 per cent are married;
- 91.5 per cent have between one and three children (only 9.2 per cent have children under age three);
- 52 per cent work over 40 hours per week.

Motivation

Women are often frustrated by the inflexible work styles found in the corporate world. The woman business owner displays a high degree of self-esteem and confidence in starting her business and was more motivated by a desire to control her own destiny than by financial gain.

Education

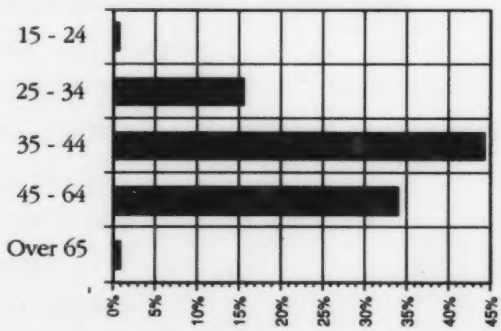
Many surveys suggest the woman business owner has attained a higher level of education than women in general.



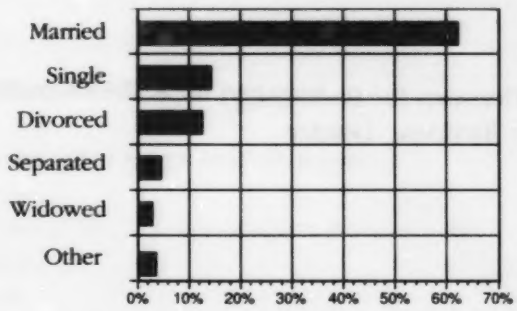
Age Group

Small business owners in British Columbia tend to be older than the general workforce.[2] They have a median age of 42.1 years (1985), compared to 33.7 years for the labour force as a whole.

The majority of women business owners are in the 35 – 44 age group.



Marital Status



Number of Children

	Number of Children	Number of Children at Home	Ages of Children at Home
0	2 %		
1 - 3	92 %		
4 - 6	.5 %		
7 Plus	0		
0		29 %	
1 - 3		67 %	
4 - 6		4 %	
7 Plus		0	
1 - 3			19 %
4 - 10			41 %
11 - 15			32 %
16 - 20			35 %
21 Plus			10 %

Includes multiple answers by respondents

Eleven per cent of survey respondents expressed child care as a problem area. A breakdown of full-time and part-time business owners within this 11per cent revealed that:

- 41 per cent of part-time workers have children under 10;
- 19 per cent of full-time workers have children under 10.

Several respondents expressed a desire to work full-time if adequate child care were available.

Reasons for Becoming a Business Owner

Self Satisfaction - Independence – 33.8 per cent

"I'm internally motivated and didn't have any interest in someone else controlling my future."

"To create something of your own is so satisfying."

Self Development - Had a Skill – 14.9 per cent

"Have done related work for the past 15 years for someone else."

"I decided to put this expertise to work for myself. In nine months I have achieved 800 percent growth."

Financial Reasons – 9 per cent

"To make a lot of money."

"Tired of working for other people without financial recognition."

Opportunity Presented Itself – 7.9 per cent

"Market segment available which was not being served."

"My husband left and it's what I know how to do—as well, I love it." (cattle ranch)

Nothing Else Available – 6.2 per cent

"Moved to a small town where good jobs were not readily available."

"No one wanted to hire me."

In Business with Life Partner – 5.8 per cent

"To help husband when he got laid off at age 53."

"In the recession of the 80's - we bought ourselves a job."

Other – 5.7 per cent

"To support a project I believe in."

"As a new immigrant I found job hunting frustrating."

Saw a Community Need – 2.7 per cent

"Saw a need in the community, could not interest anyone else, so I did it myself."

"To contribute to the community by creating more jobs for artists."

II Characteristics of Businesses Owned by Women

To facilitate comparison, many reports show few categories of work, such as service, retail/wholesale trade, manufacturing and construction. When analysing businesses started by women, the greatest percentage is always "service." The service sector is a combination of many different industries. To illustrate, the following is a sample of the many occupations contained under each heading of the chart on page 13:

Service

The broad heading of "Service" includes a variety of occupations:
business services such as advertising agencies, marketing and writing. Lawyers, chartered accountants and architects are also categorized as business services;
health services includes veterinary doctors, medical doctors and dentists.
educational services, include a finishing school, fashion design, environmental education and music instruction;
food services such as restaurants, caterers;
sports recreation and tourism also fall into the category of service.

Manufacturing

Some of the occupations within the category of manufacturing include artist, jeweller, potter, sheepskin manufacturer, special-needs-clothing designer, and the producer of a human-powered vehicle.

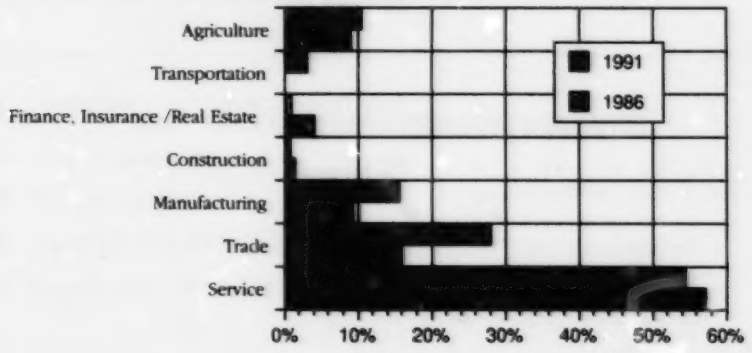
Agriculture

Agriculture occupations includes farm/resource-based businesses such as orchards, dried flowers & herbs, cattle ranching, honey production, dairy farming, forestry and agriculture consulting, sawmill operation.

Sector

Entrepreneurs often start businesses using skills they have learned as employees. While the majority of women are still choosing the service industry, a growing number of non-traditional businesses are being started by women. This may be a result of their having moved in greater numbers into non-traditional areas as employees.

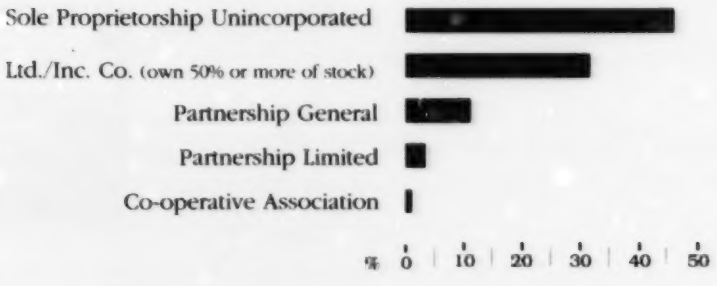
Comparison of Sector 1986 - 1991



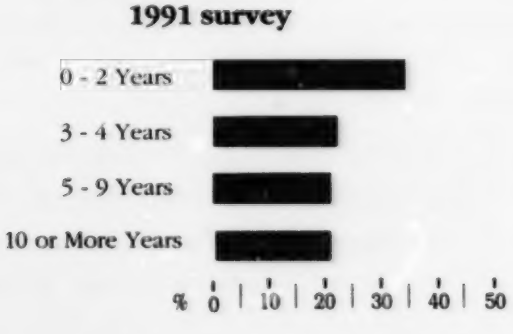
To allow for comparison with 1986 figures, "service" category for 1991 includes professional/management, communications, daycare, tourism, educational.

Legal Status of Business

A large increase in the number of respondents who were incorporated is shown, 36.6 per cent versus 13 percent in the 1986 survey. This may reflect that in the past, incorporation was viewed as an avoidable start-up expense that had often been put off for the first two to five years. More women are seeking the advice of accountants, lawyers and other professional business consultants. Having learned the benefits of incorporation, they may save as much as 50 per cent on income tax and also could legally declare bankruptcy if necessary.


Sole Proprietorship Unincorporated
Ltd./Inc. Co. (own 50% or more of stock)
Partnership General
Partnership Limited
Co-operative Association
% 0 10 20 30 40 50

Length of Business Ownership



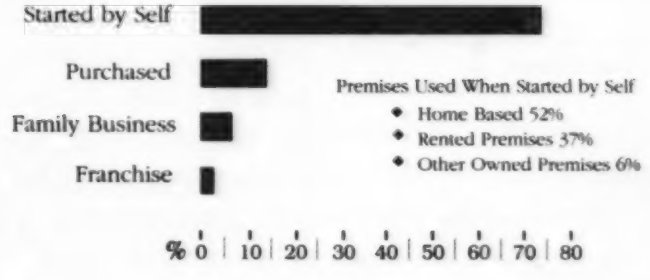
In the 1986 survey 19.8 per cent of the group were in business less than two years; 36.7 per cent between three and four years; 26.8 per cent between five and nine years and 16.7 per cent, 10 years or more.

Size of Business

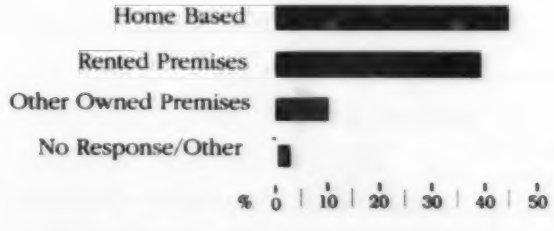
The figures available for analysis are inconclusive due to a low rate of response to this question. Figures used represent percentage of those surveyed. Sixty-three per cent are one-owner full-time businesses, 32.6 per cent have two to three full-time employees and 38.2 per cent have two to three part-time employees.

A recent assessment of 11 studies published by the Federal Business Development Bank[3] states "65 per cent of female-owned firms created jobs for outsiders."

How Business Was Started

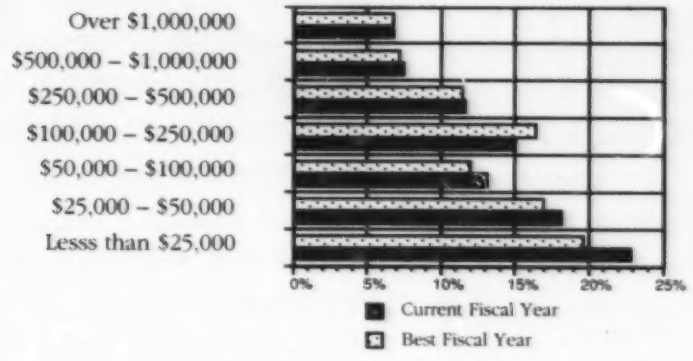


Type of Premises



Home based businesses have increased to 46% vs 32% in 1986.

Revenue Generated – Full-time



Revenues

Revenues for the current year are slightly below the best fiscal year due to such things as the Goods and Services Tax, the current recession and cross-border shopping. All are factors negatively affecting the economy of British Columbia. Respondents feel that people are spending less.

Comparison 1991 – 1986

		1986	1991
Under	$50,000	58.1%	40.9%
$50,000 –	100,000	18 %	13 %
$100,000 –	250,000	13.9%	15.1%
$250,000 –	500,000	5.8%	12.2%
$500,000 –	1,000,000	2.7%	7.8%

54 per cent of businesses surveyed in 1991 have a gross revenue of over $50,000. This may reflect inflation.

III Business Start-up

If a woman wants to operate a business, she starts it alone in most cases. Less than 15 per cent of those surveyed are in partnerships. She is solely responsible for the fate of the business. One area of difficulty in sole proprietorship is raising capital.

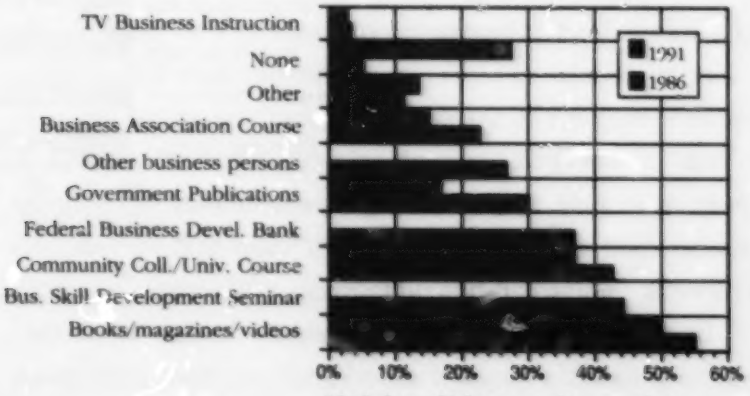
The Canadian Advisory Council On The Status of Women published a report entitled "The Glass Box" [4] which states:

> "many women start businesses in sectors where they have no experience. Forty percent of our sample reported that they had not worked in a related field before starting their businesses. Another finding was that 55% of the women had no experience as managers. This lack of experience may be one of the principal reasons why women-owned businesses start small and stay small. The financial returns are often marginal for these women, but other measures of success indicate a high return."

Business Education

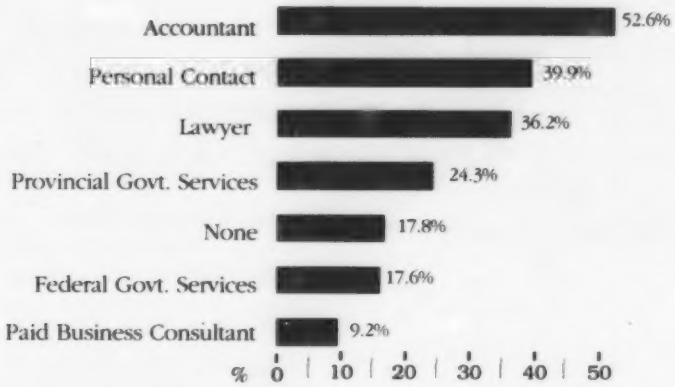
The 1986 survey showed 27.5 per cent did not use any source of business education. That figure is 5.1 per cent in 1991. While books, magazines, and videos are still the leading source of self-education, business skill development conferences and other business persons are gaining importance. 34.8 per cent of respondents claim a lack of business information is the most pressing unmet need of women in business today.

Sources of Business Education



* Includes multiple answers by respondents

Business Advisors Used at Start-up

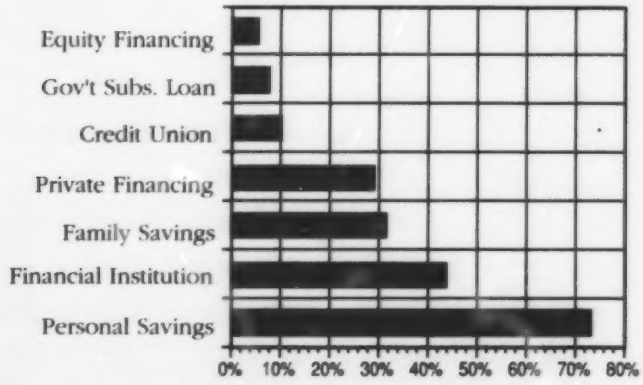


* Includes multiple answers by respondents

Finance

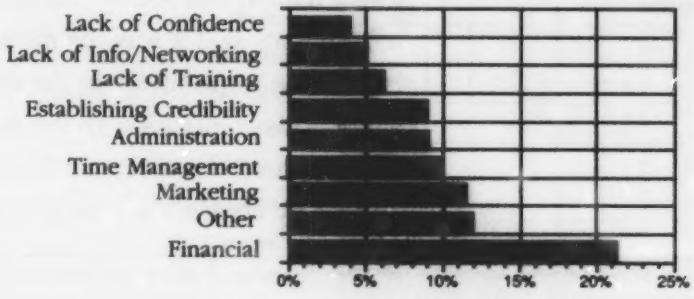
The majority use their own assets for financing business start-up. When asked to identify the most important sources of finance, 73 per cent said personal savings followed by financial institutions with 43 per cent, family savings 31 per cent and private financing 29 per cent.

Most Important Source of Financing



* Includes multiple answers by respondents.

Problems at Start-up



Overview

Finance is the area of most concern at start-up. The majority of woman business owners rely on their own assets and family loans in starting their business. As shown in the following section on success with financial institutions this is more likely out of necessity than desire. Financial institutions ranked second in order of importance as a source of financing. Problems cited with specific reference to financial institutions include:

- high interest;
- not enough collateral;
- attitudes (a sense of discrimination against self-employed and/or females);
- time (financial institutions may take weeks to assess viability).

Fifty-five per cent of those surveyed said difficulty obtaining capital is the most pressing unmet need of women in business. Marketing and lack of training are of equal importance and follow difficulty obtaining finance. Respondents also mention difficulty developing a client base. Lack of training becomes evident when the woman in business finds herself producing, marketing, accounting and managing. Eleven per cent chose "other" – some of the areas of problem listed were: administration, long hours, low pay and maintaining motivation.

Problems with Finance

Personal savings are the most important source of financing for all marital categories. Eighty-five per cent of single respondents said it was the most important as did 90 per cent of the respondents in the divorced or separated category. This coincides with the accompanying "success at the bank" figures. Some female entrepreneurs may use personal savings by choice, for others, lack of financing is a reason.

Marital Status and Financing

	Were you successful in obtaining financing from financial institution ?		Most important source of finance was:
	Yes	No	Personal Savings
Married	51%	22%	68.9 %
Single	34%	38%	85 %
Divorced/ Separated	39%	34%	89 %
Widowed	46%	13%	60 %

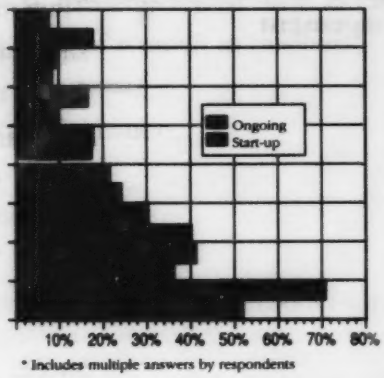
Attitudes

The following excerpt is from an article written by Lois A. Steverson, entitled : *Women Entrepreneurs – Problems and Perceptions.*[5]

> "Women in Canada earn less than 65% of what men earn in paid jobs. They therefore have less opportunity to accumulate personal assets which could be used as collateral security for bank loans to start their businesses. Evidence supports the notion that women enter business with lower debt equity ratios than men do. To a great extent, this reflects their unequal economic status and consequent inability to meet the financing criteria of banks. Many bankers perceive women to be a higher risk, regardless of their financial status, and women are much more likely to be required to have a guarantor or co-signer for their bank loans. This lack of access to capital means that women may start smaller businesses which grow more slowly. The lower risk however, may be a contributing factor to their higher survival rates."

IV Established Business

Advisors Used Ongoing compared to Start-up

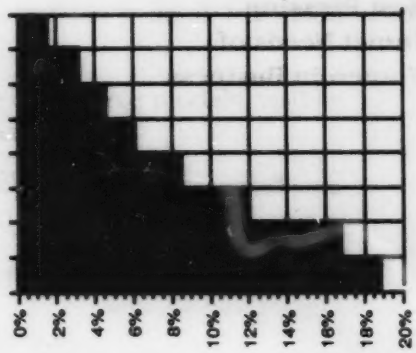


* Includes multiple answers by respondents

Counsellors Needed

Once the business is launched, there is a notable increase in the use of lawyers and accountants and a drop in personal contact. Women require more individual counselling and assistance with making long-term business plans. Conferences tend to focus on start-up but problems become unique as a business develops. One-on-one advice from experienced business people is required.

Biggest Problem



Finance is the biggest problem for women in established businesses. Time management becomes more of a problem as the demands of the growing business increase. Specific problems mentioned under the category of "other" include:

- need to expand or hire help but lack working capital;
- need for one-on-one professional advisors.

Time Management

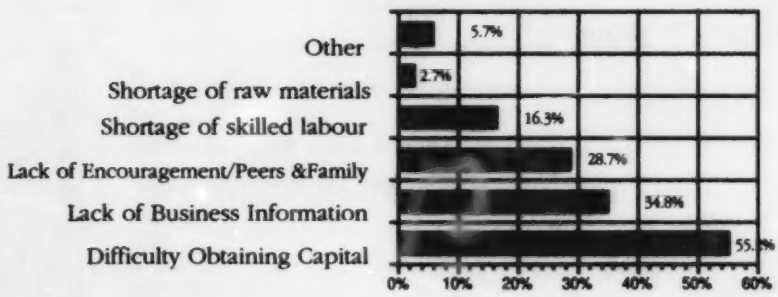
Time management increased in importance by 7 per cent since start-up. The main differences between the women who found time management to be their most pressing unmet need and the overal statistics are:

- 64 per cent work more than 40 hours per week compared to the overall average of 54 per cent
- 20 per cent are in the $250,000 - $500,000 category as compared to the overall average of 11 percent.

Success has been accompanied by greater demands on their time and ability to juggle responsibilities. Contributing factors identified include:

- ages of children;
- business became totally consuming;
- delegating - *"I wanted to do it all"*;
- difficult to separate work time/space from personal time/space;
- need management training *"can't leave business."*

Most Pressing Unmet Needs of Women in Business



* Includes multiple answers by respondents

1. Difficulty obtaining capital

Fifty-five per cent find difficulty obtaining capital to be the most pressing unmet need of women in business. Reasons stated are consistent with those given under "difficulty at start-up":

- high interest;
- not enough capital;
- attitude.

2. Lack of business information

Thirty-five per cent cited lack of business information as the second most pressing unmet need of women in business. Identified requirements are:

- centralized source of information;
- support groups;
- mentors, one-on-one advisors;
- counselling;
- personal development training and self-motivation.

3. Lack of Encouragement

Twenty-nine per cent of the women surveyed cited lack of encouragement from peers and family as their main area of difficulty. Identified requirements are:

- more publicity about successful women in business;
- self esteem/motivational workshops;
- higher profile of entrepreneurship as a serious business option.

4. Attitudes

In the area of attitudes, many women in business surveyed have perceived a negative attitude in general. Identified needs are:

- societal acceptance (more role models, visible success stories);
- to be taken seriously in what is perceived as a male dominated power structure in govern ment and financial institutions and non-traditional fields.

5. Child Care

To enable more women to fulfill their desire to work full-time rather than part-time and to assist with the problem of time-management, child care needs to be:

- subsidized;
- adequate;
- taxable as a business expense.

Special Provincial Initiatives

Survey respondents were asked:

1. Should there be specific provincial initiatives to assist women in business setting up?

59.3% Yes **29.8% No** **10% No answer**

If YES , indicate:

Start up Financing - usually small amounts are needed for start up (under $15,000). Interest rates are very high for loans of this size. Easier access is needed i.e.: deferred repayment for the first year, low interest, long term repayment with government guarantee.

Centralized Source of Information - Co-ordinate information to enable direct access for women. Opportunities, suppliers, contacts, courses and network opportunities.

Counselling - facilitate business plan assistance, one-on-one counselling or a panel to guide in preparation of the plan. Mentors and individual advisory support systems are required.

If NO, indicate:

Forty-nine percent of respondents who said "no" feel equal opportunities should be available for men and women. Assistance should not be gender specific.

"Women have to realize they have to work 110 percent harder to make it than men."

"Don't require special treatment, only equal treatment."

2. Should there be specific provincial initiatives to assist with expansion?

50% Yes **23% No** **18% No answer**

If YES, indicate:

Counselling - long range business plan assistance.

Mentors - guidance from experienced business people.

Training - Business administration and management skills training should be available in a variety of ways to facilitate the busy entrepreneur. For example, video tapes, evening classes, on site training, excursions.

Finance - Once the business is up and running, the woman business owner can experience a lack of funds due to rapid growth and expansion. Easier access to financing is required.

Information - Accessible, centralized information with regard to new markets, networking opportunities, funding and other

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